

Hatchery Reform Policy C-3619– (Briefing)

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“Summary SHEET”

Meeting dates:	August 5, 2016 Commission Meeting
Agenda item:	Hatchery Reform Policy C-3619 – (Briefing)
Staff Contact:	Kelly Cunningham, DAD, Fish Program; Eric Kinne, Hatchery Systems Manager, Fish Program
Presenter(s):	Kelly Cunningham, DAD, Fish Program Eric Kinne, Hatchery Systems Manager, Fish Program

Background:

Hatcheries have operated in Washington State for more than a century, beginning with the first hatchery on the Kalama River in 1895. Originally built to compensate for land use decisions that permanently altered large areas of fish-producing habitat, state hatcheries have since become an important part of the state's economy, releasing millions of fish annually for harvest by recreational and commercial fisheries. Tagging studies indicate that more than 75% of the salmon caught in Puget Sound and 90% of the salmon caught in the Columbia River originate from hatcheries, as do about 99% of all steelhead. Contemporary economic reports estimate the contribution of hatchery salmon and steelhead fisheries to the state's economy to be just under \$70 million dollars.

Currently, the WDFW operates 83 hatcheries of which about three-quarters are dedicated to the propagation of salmon and steelhead. The remaining hatcheries propagate trout and other gamefish. Overall salmon and steelhead production by WDFW totals about 146 million juveniles.

As with all activities that can affect wild stocks, state hatcheries have come under intense review since the federal listing of salmon population groupings under the [Endangered Species Act](#) (ESA). While there are many hatchery programs that are acting to stabilize and even increase the abundance of depressed wild stocks, artificial production, in general, has been identified as one of the factors associated with the decline in natural populations of Pacific salmonids.

WDFW worked with federal natural resource agencies and the regional science panel, the [Hatchery Scientific Review Group](#) (HSRG), to identify ways to minimize adverse impacts of hatchery operations on depressed wild stocks, while contributing to sustainable fisheries. The HSRG conducted a comprehensive review of 178 hatchery programs and 351 salmon and steelhead populations in Puget Sound/Coastal Washington and the Columbia River Basin in 2001-2009. The resulting population-specific recommendations are intended to provide scientific guidance for managing each hatchery more effectively in the future.

These ongoing efforts, including the Departments' initiative through [21 Century Salmon and Steelhead](#), the Fish and Wildlife Commission's adoption of their [Hatchery and Fishery Reform Policy C-3619](#) are all clear roadmaps for hatchery operations into the future in order to fulfill the dual role of harvest and conservation.

Implementation of these above initiatives relative to WDFW hatchery programs occurred through the development Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans submitted for federal ESA coverage.

The state's hatchery system represents a public investment of over \$1-billion. Built as compensation for lost natural habitat, state operated hatcheries produce millions of fish for harvest every year, supporting fisheries and local economies from northern Puget Sound to the Columbia River. For an increasing number of depressed wild stocks, hatchery programs offer the best chance of survival. Over the years, WDFW has worked to protect the public's investment in state hatcheries and make the changes necessary to ensure they will continue to provide these benefits in the 21st Century.

In 2011, Department staff provided a three part series that described the scope of the state's hatchery system, including the historical and legal context for operations, the important economic value to the state, and the contemporary challenges we face with protecting our depleted natural populations, while providing fish to support sustainable fisheries. From 2012-2015, Department staff updated the Commission on our progress related to FWC Policy 3619.

We have experienced a paradigm shift in how we operate hatcheries, and the adoption of the FWC policy C-3619 helped catalyze the changes to achieve hatchery reform. This is a status update to the FWC relative to achieving the policy C-3619.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

None.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Puget Sound Hatchery Action Advisory Committee <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hatcheries/pshaac/>

Action requested:

None. Briefings only.

Draft motion language:

NA

Justification for Commission action:

NA

Communications Plan:

NA

Form revised 10/16/2008 - sdy

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

POLICY DECISION

**POLICY TITLE: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Hatchery and Fishery Reform**

POLICY NUMBER: C-3619

Effective Date: November 6, 2009

Supersedes: N/A

See Also:

Approved by: Miranda Wecker, Chair
Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Purpose

The purpose of this Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife policy is to advance the conservation and recovery of wild salmon and steelhead by promoting and guiding the implementation of hatchery reform.

Definition and Intent

Hatchery reform is the scientific and systematic redesign of hatchery programs to help recover wild salmon and steelhead and support sustainable fisheries. The intent of hatchery reform is to improve hatchery effectiveness, ensure compatibility between hatchery production and salmon recovery plans and rebuilding programs, and support sustainable fisheries.

General Policy Statement

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) shall promote the conservation and recovery of wild salmon and steelhead and provide fishery-related benefits by establishing clear goals for each state hatchery, conducting scientifically defensible-operations, and using informed decision making to improve management. Furthermore, it is recognized that many state operated hatcheries are subject to provisions under U.S. v. Washington and U.S. v. Oregon and that hatchery reform actions must be done in close coordination with tribal co-managers.

Artificial production programs will be designated as one of the following:

- Conservation Programs. Artificial production programs implemented with a conservation objective shall have a net aggregate benefit for the diversity, spatial structure, productivity, and abundance of the target wild population.
- Harvest Programs. Artificial production programs implemented to enhance harvest opportunities shall provide fishery benefits while allowing watershed-specific goals for the diversity, spatial structure, productivity, and abundance of wild populations to be met.

State commercial and recreational fisheries will need to increasingly focus on the

harvest of abundant hatchery fish. As a general policy, the Department shall implement mark-selective salmon and steelhead fisheries, unless the wild populations substantially affected by the fishery are meeting spawner and broodstock management objectives.

In addition, the Department may consider other management approaches provided they are as or more effective than a mark selective fishery in achieving spawner and broodstock management objectives.

Hatchery reform should be implemented as part of an “all-H” strategy that integrates hatchery, harvest, and habitat actions. Although this policy focuses on hatchery and harvest reform, in no way does it diminish the significance of habitat protection and restoration.

In implementing the policy guidelines the Department shall work with the tribes in a manner that is consistent with U.S. v. Washington and U.S. v. Oregon and other applicable state laws and agreements or federal laws and agreements.

Policy Guidelines

1. Use the principles, standards, and recommendations of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) to guide the management of hatcheries operated by the Department. In particular, promote the achievement of hatchery goals through adaptive management based on a structured monitoring, evaluation, and research program.
2. The Department will prioritize and implement improved broodstock management (including selective removal of hatchery fish) to reduce the genetic and ecological impacts of hatchery fish and improve the fitness and viability of natural production working toward a goal of achieving the HSRG broodstock standards for 100% of the hatchery programs by 2015.
3. Develop watershed-specific action plans that systematically implement hatchery reform as part of a comprehensive, integrated (All-H) strategy for meeting conservation and harvest goals at the watershed and Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU)/Distinct Population Segment (DPS) levels. Action Plans will include development of stock (watershed) specific population designations and application of HSRG broodstock management standards. In addition, plans will include a time-line for implementation, strategies for funding, estimated costs including updates to cost figures each biennium.
4. Externally mark all Chinook, coho and steelhead artificial production that is intended to be used for harvest except as modified by state-tribal agreements or for conservation or research needs.
5. Secure necessary funding to ensure that Department-operated hatchery facilities comply with environmental regulations for passage facilities, water intake screening, and pollutant control systems.

6. Implement hatchery reform actions on a schedule that meets or exceeds the benchmarks identified in the 21st Century Salmon and Steelhead Framework.
7. Provide an annual report to the Fish and Wildlife Commission on progress of implementation.
8. Develop, promote and implement alternative fishing gear to maximize catch of hatchery-origin fish with minimal mortality to native salmon and steelhead.
9. Seek funding from all potential sources to implement hatchery reform and selective fisheries.
10. Define “full implementation” of state-managed mark selective recreational and commercial fisheries and develop an implementation schedule.
11. Work with tribal co-managers to establish network of Wild Salmonid Management Zones (WSMZ)¹ across the state where wild stocks are largely protected from the effects of same species hatchery programs. The Department will have a goal of establishing at least one WSMZ for each species in each major population group (bio-geographical region, strata) in each ESU/DPS. Each stock selected for inclusion in the WSMZ must be sufficiently abundant and productive to be self-sustaining in the future. Fisheries can be conducted in WSMZ if wild stock management objectives are met as well as any necessary federal ESA determinations are received.

¹ Wild Salmonid Management Zone is equal in meaning and application to the term of ‘Wild Stock Gene Bank’ as used and defined in the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan.